

1 Southbridge Associates Meeting

May 12, 2021

2 Announcements: April retreat materials on website...June 23 next month will be a picnic on Clara & Eddy's deck on Chestnut St in Southbridge...details to follow!! Save the dates: August 15/October 30 in Lowell for fall retreat

Acts 1: 1st reading... "Then they prayed,
"You, Lord, who know the hearts of all,
show which one of these two you have chosen
to take the place in this apostolic ministry
from which Judas turned away to go to his own place."
Then they gave lots to them, and the lot fell upon Matthias,
and he was counted with the eleven apostles."

Gospel: John 17:11-19

Holy Father, guard them as they pursue this life
That you conferred as a gift through me,
So they can be one heart and mind
As we are one heart and mind.
As long as I was with them, I guarded them
In the pursuit of the life you gave through me;
I even posted a lookout.
And not one of them got away,
Except for the rebel bent on destruction
(the exception that proved the rule of Scripture).

Now I'm returning to you.
I'm saying these things in the world's hearing
So my people can experience
My joy completed in them.
I gave them your word;
The godless world hated them because of it,

Because they didn't join the world's ways,
Just as I didn't join the world's ways.
I'm not asking that you take them out of the world
But that you guard them from the Evil One.
They are no more defined by the world
Than I am defined by the world.
Make them holy—consecrated—with the truth;
Your word is consecrating truth.
In the same way that you gave me a mission in the world,
I give them a mission in the world.
I'm consecrating myself for their sakes
So they'll be truth-consecrated in their mission.

Faith Sharing Questions:

1. Consider (in the words of the 1st reading) that you too, as an associate, were chosen by God, who knew your heart, and (in the words of the Gospel) gave you a mission and consecrated you for God's sake. What does that mean to you?
2. With that consecration comes a requirement: we cannot join "the world's ways..." we cannot be "defined by the world". What does that mean to you?

Reflection:

3Does God know our heart? And if you believe God does, what does that imply? This is a powerful truth that can be both comforting and challenging all at the same time! **4**Comforting because sometimes others suspect, accuse, do not believe us, and knowing that God knows the truth in my heart can be a strength for us! Or when I wonder just what God sees, understands about me...this passage can fill us with joy if we can believe it! God knows!!

It can also be challenging causing us to make excuses when we do not fulfill our Christian responsibilities. Like when we won't forgive someone or go to Reconciliation claiming God knows our heart and we don't need the formality.

What is said in Sunday's first reading is that God knows our deepest desires, even the ones we don't tell anyone! God knows, our likes and dislikes, God knows our thoughts and our intentions, our prayers even before we voice them... Jesus knew

5 Peter's heart and Judas' heart...both repented of their sin, but Judas didn't believe God knew his heart and he despaired he would ever be forgiven...Peter trusted that he'd get the chance to make things up to Jesus, and he did!

6 A French Taize chant goes like this: "Seigneur, tu gardes mon ame, O Dieu, tu connais mon Coeur, Conduis moi sur le chemin D'eternite"...x2...and is translated, "Lord, you keep my soul, O God, you know my heart...lead me on the road to eternity!"

7 God knows the hearts of all of us...sometimes we need to give others the benefit of the doubt cause we DON'T know their hearts; when we assume they're doing the best they can, our lives change...we leave it to God who knows their hearts to help us understand and forgive.

Our first faith sharing question tonight is about this joyful truth that God knows our hearts...

8 This Sunday's Gospel issues another challenge: this one I've personally gone back and forth with since I was young: am I supposed to be in the world but not OF the world and what exactly does that mean?!!

9 One more recent exploration has helped me: the word world in Scripture is translated from the Greek, cosmos. And it is not only meant to mean the earth where we live or even the culture we are part of. But cosmos means the entire creation of God. You & I are IN this cosmos; we are only a part of it as are the plants, insects, stars, planets, whales, girafes...you get the picture.

10 Within this created universe though, values and philosophies and tenets have been developed that are not of God: not the way God thinks/God sees...as we've just reflected on, God sees the human heart and judges things differently than "the world" does...

And so, our 2nd faith sharing question..... **11**

12 Closing Song: Chosen and Beloved (you tube)

